

TESTIMONY OF POLLY L. HANSON, CHIEF
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WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY
BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC SECURITY, INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION,
AND CYBERSECURITY

“FRONT-LINE DEFENSE: SECURITY TRAINING FOR MASS TRANSIT AND RAIL
EMPLOYEES”
SEPTEMBER 28, 2006

Chairman Lungren and Members of the Committee, good morning and thank you for asking Metro to testify at this hearing. I am Polly Hanson, Chief of the Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

Background on WMATA and MTPD

By way of background, WMATA was created in 1967 as an Interstate Compact agency through enactment of legislation by the U.S. Congress, and by the Commonwealth of Virginia, the State of Maryland, and the District of Columbia. The Metro System is designed to serve the constituencies of the National Capital Region, including employees of the federal government, the residents of the region, the citizens of our nation who come to Washington to do business with the federal government, and the millions of people who visit from throughout the world.

Since the mid 1960's, there has been dramatic growth and change in the National Capital Region. As population and employment in this region has skyrocketed, the demands on and expectations of WMATA have also grown exponentially. Each day we provide 1.2 million trips on our rail and bus systems. We are the second largest subway system and fifth largest bus system in the United States. Metro is widely recognized as being critical to the operation of the federal government. Over 150,000 federal employees (45 percent of the region's federal employees) participate in the Metrochek program. Nearly half of all Metrorail stations serve federal facilities, and approximately 10 percent of Metro's daily ridership uses stations next to the Capitol and Pentagon.

The Metro Transit Police Department was established in 1976. MTPD is the nation's first non federal tri-state transit police force. We have authorized strength of 423 sworn transit police officers and 102 special police officers. Our purpose is to prevent crime, protect Metro's customers, employees, facilities and revenues and enforce laws, ordinances, rules and regulations.

WMATA's Employee Security/Emergency Preparedness Training Initiatives

The recent rail/transit bombings in Madrid and London have also called for a top to bottom re-emphasis and re-energizing of our entire workforce on anti-terror and emergency response training. Many of the industry's best practices have been incorporated into nationally available resources developed in partnership with the Federal Transit Administration and the National Transit Institute (NTI). Since 2003, all of our bus drivers, train operators and other operations employees have been shown the National Transit Institute's *Warning Signs* video, which covers key aspects of system security for transit employees, including what to look for and what to do regarding suspicious activity, packages, devices and substances. Last year, after the attacks in London, we began showing the video again to all of our 8000 operations employees. They also receive job specific security brochures covering these areas.

The *Warning Signs* video is also being shown to non-operations personnel, and has been posted on our internal web site for viewing by all 2000 non-operations employees.

We look forward to the next version of *Warning Signs* being developed by FTA and NTI.

We are supplementing our existing training for employees with additional terrorist activity recognition classes. WMATA has been working with the National Transit Institute to develop specialized training for employees who maintain escalators, track structures, buses and railcars. The training will review the recognition of unattended or suspicious items and unusual behavior. WMATA is currently using a portion of its FY05 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Bus Transit Grant allocation towards the development of an anti-terror training initiative focused on bus operators. Once complete, WMATA plans to share the training with all the local and regional bus operators that feed into WMATA's bus systems.

All of this training will serve to reinforce the need for our employees to respond aggressively in these situations, but it's also worth noting that our operations employees on a daily basis face the challenging task of keeping a prudent balance between implementing proper security safeguards and maintaining rapid transit service.

WMATA's Regional Security/Emergency Preparedness Training Initiatives

As the largest transit provider for the National Capital Region, Metro takes its responsibility in homeland security with the seriousness it demands. WMATA's approach to transit security involves a partnership between employees, customers, the transit police and other public safety departments in the region, and the federal government. Our training initiatives designed to enhance both WMATA and the region's emergency preparedness reflect these partnerships.

Beginning in 2004, Metro Transit Police launched a new training initiative entitled "Managing Metro Emergencies." The training was devised and developed in response to the Madrid bombings as well as a recent series of service disruptions that forced thousands of customers to evacuate the Metrorail system. The "Managing Metro Emergencies" course has provided over 2000 regional law enforcement, fire and rescue, department of transportation and WMATA personnel enhanced training for mitigating, evacuating, transporting and recovering from a major service disruption in our system. The course puts particular emphasis on enhancing the management of pedestrian and vehicle traffic after any evacuations of rail stations. The course was so well received by the region that Metro will be offering a new more operational oriented course requested by the region's fire departments.

Metro transit police in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security launched another new initiative focused on prevention and detection – Behavioral

Assessment Screening System (BASS) training. 300 Metro Transit Police and regional law enforcement officers took a highly specialized training course to spot behaviors of would-be terrorists planning or executing an attack, and learned how to take action to mitigate danger, including identifying the behavioral characteristics of a suicide bomber.

WMATA's Emergency Response Training Facility opened in 2002, and is the only transit facility of its kind in the nation that is available 24 hours per day, seven days a week to train emergency personnel. The facility includes a mock train tunnel that allows regional emergency responders to train for disasters such as smoke/fire, collisions and potential terrorist incidents in a transit/tunnel environment. More than 8000 firefighters, police officers and other first responders, including the FBI, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and the Pentagon Force Protection Agency have trained at the facility. The facility was awarded the American Public Transportation Association's Management Innovation Award for 2004.

The training facility also houses the nation's first passenger rail emergency evacuation simulator. The simulator can roll a passenger commuter rail car 180 degrees in 10 degree increments, simulating railcar positions after derailments and other rail incidents. Metro will use the "rollover rig" to train fire, police, and other first responders on the complications associated with rescuing people from a rail car. The Federal Railroad Administration will use it to assist in evaluating interior design safety of intercity and commuter passenger rail cars.

WMATA also continues to be an active participant in various regional exercises. Just last week, WMATA sponsored a regional drill that provided an opportunity for the region's first responders to practice their skills in the Metrorail environment, along with testing Metro's own procedures for utilizing a rescue train. WMATA has also sponsored a series of table top exercises with all key regional players, including federal agencies, as part of our effort to enhance continuity of operations planning (COOP) following the September 11, 2001 attacks. WMATA also participates in regional drills and exercises sponsored by the DHS, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and various local jurisdictions in the National Capital Region.

Public Awareness/Education Campaigns

A critical component towards ensuring that all the training we conduct with our employees and regional first responders raises the National Capital Region's emergency preparedness level is to also constantly engage our customers. WMATA has increased public announcements to our customers, stressing the need to be attentive to their surroundings. Our recent public outreach efforts include campaigns known as, "See it, Say it" and "Is that your bag?," which was cited by former Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Under Secretary Hutchinson as an effective tool for raising passenger awareness and involvement in the transit environment. We are also conducting monthly "Open Houses" at rail stations during the morning rush hour. During these events, officials from the Metro Transit Police and our safety and

communications departments are on hand to answer questions from customers as well as distribute emergency preparedness/safety brochures and expanding upon emergency evacuation procedures that can be found at our web site: www.wmata.com.

In 2004, Metro Transit Police launched a Metro Citizens Corps program that provides Metro-specific training ranging from rail safety and emergency preparedness and response to identification of terrorist activity. More than 200 citizens across the region have received the training. Area residents who have received specialized community/emergency response training within their local jurisdiction are eligible to join the Metro Citizens Corps.

Conclusion

WMATA appreciates the important contribution training provides towards enhancing our emergency preparedness and response capabilities and will continue to seek opportunities to work with our employees and many partners in the National Capital Region, including the Federal Transit Administration and the Department of Homeland Security to refine and expand upon the progress achieved to date. I would be happy to answer any questions posed by the Committee.